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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000574

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/ANP, EAP/RSP

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [ID](#) [PP](#)

SUBJECT: INDONESIA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA -- GOOD NEIGHBORS  
AT THE BORDER

Classified By: Pol/C Joesph L. Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Indonesia has overcome past tensions to forge a neighborly and increasingly cooperative cross-border relationship with Papua New Guinea (PNG). Although traffic and trade between Indonesia and PNG remains small, Indonesian officials are seeking to expand it. A new border crossing near Jayapura, the provincial capital of Papua region in eastern Indonesia, is boosting links between the two countries. Poloff's recent visit to the border confirmed these developments. END SUMMARY.

#### A TROUBLED HISTORY

¶2. (C) Relations across Indonesia's border with Papua New Guinea (PNG) have not always been easy. Following the 1969 incorporation of Papua--formerly Dutch New Guinea--into Indonesia, some Papuan independence supporters fled into PNG. Indonesian officials long suspected that elements in PNG supported Papuan separatists groups in Indonesia, particularly the Papua Freedom Movement (OPM). As a result, traffic across the nearly 450-mile border was minimal for decades.

¶3. (C) The region's rough terrain also created problems. Much of the border traverses rugged mountains covered by dense forest. Only two official border crossings exist: near Merauke at the southern end and near Jayapura, the Papua provincial capital, in the north. Apart from these two crossings, the border remains poorly demarcated.

#### INCREASING BORDER TRAFFIC

¶4. (C) The GOI is now promoting cross-border commerce, Indonesian officials told poloff during a March visit to a newly constructed border crossing near Jayapura. They reported approximately 2,000-3,000 border crossings per month by people using traditional border crossing cards (TBC). (Note: The Indonesian government issues TBCs to people living near the border who have family members on the PNG side. It recognizes PNG-issued TBCs for entry into Indonesia.) Most of these are short-term visitors who cross for a few days to shop and visit family before returning to PNG.

¶5. (C) Indonesian immigration officials reported that around 200-250 people cross the border using passports each month. Most of these are Indonesian or PNG residents who do not qualify for the TBC. Indonesian passport inspectors told poloff that Malaysians comprise the largest group of third-country border crossers. (Note: Provincial government officials said several Malaysian forestry companies had operations on the PNG side.)

¶6. (C) Indonesian officials stressed that the staffing of its immigration, customs and quarantine agencies at border

crossings was entirely civilian. Military and police forces patrolled the border itself but were not involved in the operation of border crossings. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DEPLU) official assigned to the Papua provincial government to handle cross-border issues told poloff that "demilitarizing" the border crossing had been a GOI priority. Indonesian officials believed a non-intimidating atmosphere at the border was essential to promoting cross-border contacts. During poloff's visit, relations between military and civilian officials at the border appeared cordial and professional.

#### POSITIVE CENTRAL/PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

17. (C) The border crossing also represents a good example of cooperation between the central government and Papua provincial government. Central government officials handle the operation of the border crossing itself. The provincial government is responsible for promoting cross-border trade and other contacts. Officials from the provincial government and from the Ministry of Home Affairs cited the division of responsibility over the border crossing as an example of the success of the Papua Special Autonomy Law.

18. (C) Indonesian officials hope that increased border traffic will bring increased trade. The provincial government has financed the construction of a large shopping area near the border that is slated to open in May 2009. (Note: A large informal market already exists there.) Provincial government officials said that PNG residents reported finding a greater range of goods at better prices available on the Indonesian side.

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